

SOCIALIST STUDIES

No. 45 Autumn 2002

CAPITALISM OR SOCIALISM

THE LABOUR PARTY: FROM METHODISM TO ASIAN BABES

STATE CAPITALISM

THE TYRANNY OF RELIGION

THE POLITICS OF BREAST FEEDING

A QUESTION OF PRICE

LETTER FROM CYBER SPACE

**OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE SOCIALIST PARTY
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

Communications to: General Secretary,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself in the class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to be emancipated, its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, is now only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth raised by the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the overthrow of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression to an agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all other classes of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be opposed to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of politics determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of the United Kingdom to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be brought about to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that there may be substituted in its place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO:
The Socialist Party of Great Britain.
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8BP

CAPITALISM OR SOCIALISM

The ideas associated with Socialism do not come from nowhere. They derive from the class struggle between capitalists and workers. In turn the class struggle is rooted in material conditions of existence around the need to secure a living. It is recognition by Socialists that capitalism, despite hundreds of social reformers and philanthropists, cannot be made to work in the interest of all society. For millions of workers, to secure a decent existence is constrained by the unnecessary rationing imposed by the wages system.

In capitalist society, the means of social existence - the land, factories, communication systems, transport, raw resources, distribution points and so on - belong to the capitalist class and production is carried on for profit. Socialism would replace production for profit and the class system. The basis of Socialism is that the means of production would become common property under democratic control by free men and women who would co-operatively carry on production for the benefit of the whole community.

From its earliest days, capitalism contained within its productive system the techniques to increase social wealth. However, capitalists are not in the business to use this potential for increased social wealth for the good of all society. Their anti-social drive is to make a profit, parasitically living off a portion of unearned income, while reinvesting the remainder to accumulate more social wealth as an end in itself. Social needs go unmet. Profit is the primary drive of production under capitalism. No profit means no production.

To enable social wealth and the means of producing social wealth to be used for the benefit of all society is the aim of socialist politics. It has no other reason outside this remit. The purpose of socialist propaganda is to press upon the working class majority the urgent and vital need to abolish capitalism and establish socialism. The aim of the political class struggle is to end class society with its class divisions, class struggle and class power.

Socialists ask workers to look at the world in which we live with its bosses, the bossed; the rich and the poor; the boredom and powerlessness at work. There are thousands of pressing social problems which need to be urgently resolved. War, poverty, hunger, disease, unemployment and social alienation to name but a few. They are all solvable problems.

However, capitalism prevents them from being solved. In fact, capitalism causes these problems in the first place. Unemployment only exists because there is employment. Employment only exists because there is a labour market. Labour markets exist because workers are forced to sell their ability to work for a wage or a salary. And workers are forced to sell their labour power because of the existence of the wages system and private property ownership of the means of producing wealth.

Class-divided society exists because capitalists monopolise and control the means of production. Yet because of the employers' drive for profit, production cannot be directed to benefit all society. A new social framework is required in which social problems can be resolved and human needs met. The new framework has to be Socialism.

Socialism is not idealistic or Utopian but practical and could be established now. Socialists base their case against capitalism and for Socialism on what production currently produces and what it could produce if class ownership and class privilege is removed.

Today, the means exist to feed and clothe the entire world's population. Decent housing, good education, positive culture and opportunity for all are attainable. We have the means to create a social system which responds to human needs where people all over the world would live comfortable, satisfying and creative lives. All of society would be actively involved in the democratic affairs of society from which most are currently excluded.

Only one thing is needed before Socialism can be achieved. That is, a majority of the world's workers, the world-wide working class, recognising that the wages system is against their interests, use their political power to overthrow the class system. The tragedy is that, as of now, the majority of workers use their votes only to endorse the continuance of this wasteful system of class exploitation, lurching from crisis to crisis, with threats of unemployment and war always looming over them.

Christianity and Slavery

Christians accepted slavery, and when Christianity was adopted as the state religion the Church itself soon became the biggest slave-owner in the Roman Empire. Slavery was approved of by the Church's teachers, such as St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas and many others, including the Popes Nicholas V and Paul III. The slave trade flourished with the approval of the Church, and in Britain and America it was the established churches that fought most vigorously against abolition. Slaves had been bought and sold by Popes (eg Innocent X and Alexander VII) and Popes continued to keep slaves until the late 18th century. The Bible texts were used constantly to support slavery. (For further information see J Kahl, **The Misery of Christianity** (1971) and Carl Lofmark, **What is the Bible?**, (1990). Today, all religions have no difficulty in supporting wage slavery and the retention of the wages system.

LABOUR: A PARTY OF CAPITALISM

From Methodism to Asian Babes

In a letter to the **Times** (15 June 2001) a Mr Victor Black wrote:

"Four years ago you printed a letter in which I suggested that Margaret Thatcher's greatest contribution to the history of this country was that she cured the Labour Party of Socialism. What I did not foresee at that time, was that this feat also seriously undermined the need for a Conservative Party."

Margaret Thatcher did no such thing. The Labour Party has never been, is not, and never will be a Socialist Party with a Socialist object and a Socialist political programme.

Most of Labour's early leaders were from the Methodist tradition of Christianity and not from the Socialism of Marx. Keir Hardie, founder of the Independent Labour Party, said:

"I claim for Socialism that it is the embodiment of Christianity in our industrial system."

For the founders of the Labour Party it was the **New Testament** rather than **Capital**, woolly ethics rather than scientific Socialism, and unattainable social reform rather than social revolution that guided their politics.

The Labour Party's view of society at its foundation was neither a critique of political economy nor a criticism of capitalism. The capitalist system was taken as a neutral set of institutions that were being run by greedy and self-interested people. All that was needed was for different people with a social conscience to take charge, change institutions through social reforms and an equitable society would ensue.

This was a denial of reality. No political party can abolish the effects of capitalism while accepting the cause; the pursuit of profit and capital accumulation as an anti-social pursuit in its own right. You cannot have capitalism without the negative effects of capitalism. The only way to ensure that production and distribution takes place purely to meet human need is to abolish capitalism and replace it with Socialism. And Labour has never existed for this purpose.

Labour simply does not understand capitalism. They do not appreciate the dangers of not having principles and being opposed to the avowedly capitalism political parties. Ramsay MacDonald, the first Labour Prime Minister, said that he could see "*no profound*" gulf between Liberalism and Socialism. He argued that Socialism was to be furthered by "*the close collaboration of men of goodwill from all classes*" on the basis of "*conceptions of right and wrong*" common to all. Keir Hardie rejected class conflict and the class struggle as being at odds with his Christian beliefs.

From its inception the Labour Party rejected the view that the interests of the working class were completely at odds with the interests of the capitalist class. In fact, they supported free trade and economic Liberalism much as Tony Blair and Gordon Brown do today (see Gordon Brown's article "*We cannot hope to defeat poverty without embracing globalisation*" **Times**, 21 July 2001). Ironically, just before the pornographer, Richard Desmond, owner of the **Daily Express**, donated a few thousand to Labour Party coffers, a leader-page article by Simon Hinde thundered:

"Tony Blair is infatuated with business. He is in love with tycoons the way teenage girls are in love with boy bands. His love is both indiscriminating and enduring: any businessman, for ever ... The highest goal of Mr Blair's government is to do the bidding of the wealthy. So when a business comes knocking at the door, New Labour simply ignores the views and interests of everybody else: unions, party members, the voters that elected the

government

are all outvoted by the voice of a single tycoon. The really corrupt thing about New Labour is that it believes that the only people who matter are the rich and powerful" (19 February 2002).

This has its amusing side. Forced by BBC Radio 4's **Today** programme to justify the Labour Party's £100,000 donation from Richard Desmond, John Reid, Northern Ireland Secretary said:

"If you are asking if we are going to sit in moral judgement, in political judgement, on those who wish to contribute to the Labour Party, then the answer is no".

So from the starchy Christian Methodism of Hardie, Labour has moved on to the publisher of Porn magazines such as **Asian Babes** and **Reader's Wives** with no moral or political scruples.

And Labour supporters like Tony Benn have the impertinence to ask of the SPGB *"what have we done"*? We have kept Socialist ideas alive while Labour has tried to kill them. Labour has supported capitalism, enacted anti-working class policies, made tens of thousands of workers redundant in the former nationalised industries and sent millions of workers to kill other workers in numerous wars.

Labour, truly a Party of capitalism.

Intellectual Parasites

There is nothing new about the ideas of the Labour Party. They have never produced an original political idea of their own. Their core ethical beliefs

come from the Methodist, John Wesley. One National renewal comes from the Conservative, Benjamin Disraeli. Ideas on Free Trade and Globalisation come from the economic liberalism found in the writings of the 19th century Manchester School of Cobden and Bright. The reforms associated with the so-called *"Welfare State"* derived from the liberal, Lord Beveridge. And, after the Second World War, Labour first embraced the economics of Lord Keynes, a liberal, then, when his doctrines failed, they accepted the equally fallacious Monetarism of Milton Friedman, another Liberal. Even the phrase *"The Third Way"* came from the fascist politics of the National Front. Much of Labour's current policies are inherited from the Tories.

When Keir Hardie stood as an ILP in 1892 his election manifesto stated:

"Generally I am in agreement with the present programme of the Liberal Party".

Blair could have said exactly the same of his 1997 and 2001 Election Manifestoes with respect to Thatcher, Major and the Tories.

In a report of the ILP's annual conference in 1901, the **Manchester Guardian** stated:

"What must strike a liberal ... is, one would say: how much of the proceedings are devoted to the advocacy of traditional Liberal principles".

Listening to the Labour conferences today, what is the difference from the proceedings found at Tory conferences? None whatsoever. Both support capitalism.

The traditional liberal principles of the late 19th century supported by those associated with the early Labour Party were exactly the same principles of the Tories in the 1980's and early 1990's: anti-working class; anti-trade union; free trade, and unquestioning support for British capitalism.

Before the Labour Party was formed, its leading advocates were to be found in the ILP where they learnt their anti-working class politics which they were later to import into the Labour Party. At the 1893 conference Hardie's Party rejected the idea that the ILP call themselves the Socialist Labour Party. They did so on the opportunistic pretext that the Party had to appeal to a largely non-Socialist electorate. The tradition from which Labour sprang was one that abandoned principle for short-term gain. Power rather than principle; forming a government rather than persuading workers to become socialists.

Henry Pelling, the historian, has argued in his book **The Origins of the Labour Party** that by adopting the broad indefinite title of the Independent Labour Party, the party was only reflecting the fact that most of its support lay in local parties and union branches which were not committed to Socialism. The object of these bodies was to build a parliamentary party on the basis of social reform not social revolution. The eight-hour day, abolition of overtime, old age pensions and so on, were prominent amongst the ILP's early demands. Their allies in this were the trade unions.

The appeal of trade unions proved ultimately successful. It was trade union support that underpinned the early Labour Party. For in the general election of 1895 all the Labour candidates had been defeated polling 44,000 votes in all, and the ILP was on the verge of bankruptcy.

The trade unions were not interested in Socialism or socialist revolution. The trade unions wanted a political party to represent their views in parliament around wages, the right to strike without being financially penalised and other issues that would safeguard and further their interests. Before the ILP trade unions had strong links with the Liberals and supported Free Trade. However, the Liberal Party in government used the State to break strikes, especially in the docks, they had voted against the eight-hour day demand by unions, and they had done little to oppose the Taff Vale judgement of 1901. It was disillusionment with the Liberalism and not capitalism that forced the unions to side with Labour.

During the period of the Liberal government between 1906 and 1914 the Labour MPs merely acted as a pressure group, prepared to sell their vote for small, piecemeal legislative measures deemed to be in the interest of trade unions, like the repeal of the Taff Vale judgement. In the Trade Disputes Act of 1906, Labour followed where the Liberal Party led like a well trained retainer. In fact the Labour Party was described as "*the handmaiden of liberalism*".

What of the Fabians, another group who were instrumental in the formation of the Labour Party? They were a group of radical liberals that included George Bernard Shaw, H G Wells, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb. It was the Fabians who linked State intervention in the economy with Socialism. They concluded that any state provision was Socialist, like the provision of public baths, playing fields, cemeteries, washhouses and public conveniences. Even the War Office and Scotland Yard were considered to be *socialist* institutions. Taking their logic to its absurd conclusion they would have considered ancient Roman baths, amphitheatres and viaducts as "*socialist*" and Henry VII's "*nationalisation*" of the army as a piece of "*socialist legislation*".

The Fabians also contributed the political theory of "*gradualism*". The Fabians did not like the word "*revolution*", just as they disliked Marx and his labour theory of value. "*Socialism*" would consist of a series of imperceptible small steps until one day we would have Socialism. To quote Keir Hardie, Socialism would come "*like a thief in the night*". The instrument was to be the State and only those intellectuals from the Fabians would see the bigger picture.

The Failure of Nationalisation

The theory of state capitalism or nationalisation has been an unmitigated disaster. Nationalisation never abolished the class struggle and class privilege. Social reforms met social reality and were watered down or were incapable of being implemented. All the main players in the Fabians went off to become

supporters of Eugenics. Socialism has not been brought one step nearer. The object of the Fabians was never Socialism but, instead, State capitalism.

In studying the origins of the Labour Party it is clear that they were destined to become indistinguishable from the Tories. The Labour Party has not brought Socialism about because from the outset it was never a Socialist Party. It sought to win votes on the basis of social reform not social revolution.

To return to Mr Black's letter, a rising Socialist movement would not only render the Conservative Party useless but also the Labour Party. They would both be seen for what they are: political organisations representing the interests of the capitalist class.

MARX AND STATE CAPITALISM

This is a response we made to an article which appeared in the US magazine **Discussion Bulletin**.

In the last edition of Discussion Bulletin you published an article from the Socialist Standard by Pieter Lawrence entitled "Socialism: sudden and gradual change". In his article he made the assertion that the revolutionary programme set out in the Communist Manifesto was "fatally flawed" (p12) and "it was in effect, a recipe for state capitalism".

This has never been the position of the Socialist Party of Great Britain.

In 1945, the SPGB published a pamphlet "Nationalisation of Socialism?". In Chapter IX, Karl Marx and Nationalisation, a considered view was made on the political programme set out in the Manifesto by Marx and Engels. The chapter is reprinted below.

Chapter IX

Karl Marx and Nationalisation

Before leaving the subject of nationalisation it will be useful to consider the significance of the fact that Karl Marx, to whom Socialists are so greatly indebted, was responsible for proposals for State control of various industries and services, and some advocates of nationalisation in our own time have tried to find support for their schemes in the writings of Marx.

In 1848 was published the *Communist Manifesto*, by Karl Marx and his friend and fellow Socialist Frederick Engels. In it, in Section II, Marx and Engels wrote as follows:

"We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy. The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, ie, of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

"Of course, in the beginning this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionising the mode of production" (*Communist Manifesto: Marx and Engels, 1848, Reeves Edition, p21*).

Marx and Engels continued:

"These measures will, of course, be different in different countries. Nevertheless, in the most advanced countries the following will be pretty generally applicable"

Among the list of ten points that follow are these:

"Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.

"Abolition of all rights of inheritance.

"Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly.

"Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State."

It is only necessary to examine these proposals put forward in 1848 to see that in purpose and in method they have no resemblance, beyond an accidental resemblance of phrases to the nationalisation proposals put forward to-day [ie in 1945] by those who accept the continuance of State Capitalism, with its property incomes, wages system, buying and selling, and so on. Marx and Engels, since they proposed these measures as methods encroaching on the capitalist class in the period immediately after the workers had gained political supremacy, of course did not contemplate any form of "compensation". They envisaged the advent of Socialism and were therefore not considering (as advocates of nationalisation do to-day) the continuance of class divisions in society and of the existing State power by which the propertied class protects its privilege and property. The 10 proposals listed by Marx and Engels were immediately followed by a paragraph in which they outlined the socialist view of the abolition of classes:

"When in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with those conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonism, and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class."

Above all it cannot be emphasised too much that Marx and Engels in 1848, and throughout their lives, perceived that Socialism necessarily involves the abolition of the system of wage-labour: the modern advocates of nationalisation rarely, if ever, even recognise that that step is practicable let alone a necessity. This applies among others to the defenders of the system of State Capitalism that is being developed in Russia, with its permanent features of investment by individual investors in State bonds, its right of inheritance, and its great and growing inequality of income received in the various grades and social strata in the Russian system.

In conclusion it need only to be added that when Marx and Engels published the 1872 preface to the German edition of the Manifesto they wrote:

"... the general principles laid down in the Manifesto are, on the whole, as correct to-day as ever. Here and there some detail might be improved. The practical application of the principles will depend, as the Manifesto itself states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions for the time being existing, and, for that reason, no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of Section II. That passage would, in many respects, be very differently worded to-day."

How little Engels shared modern views that nationalisation is Socialism can be seen in his "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" (Allen and Unwin, 1892, pp 71-2) where he pointed out that

"The modern State, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers - proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is rather brought to a head".

He held the view that the formation of trusts would force the State ultimately "to undertake the direction of production" (p69), but he was careful to add that such measures as railway nationalisation by Bismarck, for military and political reasons, or by the Belgian State for ordinary political and financial reasons, were not instances of State intervention considered economically inevitable because the means of production and distribution had actually outgrown the form of management by joint stock companies.

Were Engels alive to-day he would see that the capitalists and the State are trying to solve the problem which he foresaw, by the formation of public utility corporations or private monopolies, more or less under close regulation by the State. As Engels also foresaw, such measures are by their nature only temporary ones, they cannot solve the problem to the satisfaction of the majority of the population. They serve to bring the problem to a head, and give us hope that the acceptance of the only solution, Socialism, by the working class, is not far distant.

THE TYRANNY OF RELIGION

Apart from its origins in primitive superstition, the belief in supernatural beings, the existence of the "soul" and the efficacy of prayers and similar rituals, religion has three main aspects or attributes: fear, escape and control. Since there is no objective or rational basis for any kind of religious belief, it is entirely socially generated and sustained by society.

There is no democracy or freedom in religion - any religion. "*Thy will be done on earth...*" runs through the whole culture of "devotion" to what ever god or gods may be concerned. Catholics do not elect the Popes, the cardinals or the priests. This is done by a tight-circled hierarchy which claims to speak for their god. In the Church of England, Archbishops are a political appointment so in this case, god speaks through the politicians. The head of the church is the monarch who is hereditary and, as head of State, in a so-called democracy, is unelected.

The "*faithful*" would not be the faithful if they had to be consulted. They can either accept that god tells the Pope that he is against contraception, abortion, divorce and homosexual practice or not, like it or lump it.

The supreme power of almighty god in Christianity, Islam or Judaism has its direct counterpart in the political power structures in the real world of capitalism where the will of god capital is done and enforced by all the naked brutality of military force - with god's support of course. Class oppression, exploitation and profit-motivated production coexist world-wide with submission to the will of a god or gods. While wage-slaves are willing to accept economic servitude they will be prepared to continue to accept the mental enslavement of religion.

The preparedness of hundreds of millions of workers throughout the world, many living in the most abject poverty, to devoutly believe in the myths,

superstitions and mumbo-jumbo of religion, far from showing any veracity in religion, demonstrates the historic and continuing coexistence of poverty and religion. The real world is but a veil of tears, poverty is god's will to be endured as the price of a ticket to eternal bliss beyond the grave. The control of workers' minds is the whole key to (the) maintaining submission and has been through all stages of class society.

That anti-science coexists with science in the world of capitalism is not at all surprising. Both are kept in separate compartments of the social mind. Both serve the needs and interests of the capitalist class. Capitalism is the supreme system of contradictions.

It is the social cohesion of being Hindu, Muslim, Jewish or Christian that holds together their culture of separatism, not any foundation in reality for what they believe and practice. That the overall effect of all of this is to hold society back by anchoring the working class to the supernatural and to capitalism is pretty obvious.

Buddhism is sometimes passed off as a philosophy rather than a religion but the reality of the control over peoples' lives and the mental oppression shows its religious character. The building of pagodas, the use of religious symbolism, the thousands of Buddha figures are shared in common with similar figures and objects in the churches and temples of other religions.

If one goes to Sri Lanka and visits the Buddhist temple in Colombo, the same acts of submission and devotion will be witnessed there as in any other place of "worship". The use of lotus blossoms rather than candles is only a variation in religious ritual. As with Christianity and Islam, Buddhism is factionalised, so that, for example, Japanese Buddhism is not regarded as the same as that of Sri Lanka.

Such schisms in the various religions can obviously not be explained in terms of the gods or Buddhas; they can only be explained by the divergent interests of rival ruling classes, nationally and internationally.

Control boils down to class power whether in India, Pakistan, Northern and Southern Ireland or anywhere else.

Fear, the terrible dread of what might happen to the "*immortal soul*" in punishment of any transgression or infringement of god's - read Capital's - will, is the universal weapon of the ruling class and its profit morality and this applies to the Buddhist belief in the myth of reincarnation.

When many women shed their burkas after the "*liberation*" of Kabul, nobody mentioned that this grotesque degradation of women is practised in most of the Islamic world. In Britain it is common to see Muslim women completely shrouded in black with only slits for the eyes. The freedom to contribute to the profits of the cosmetics industry has yet to reach them. Where the wearing of such attire is "*voluntary*", the lifelong mental conditioning and the acceptance of an inferior position can only be seen as part of the system of control.

As a stumbling block to the understanding of Socialist ideas, there is nothing more violent than religion. It embodies every feature of the reactionary against the revolutionary.

The great upsurge in the activities of Islam in the world today arises entirely from events on earth, questions of poverty, illiteracy, the aggressive militarism of Israel in particular and the turbulence of world capitalism generally. It does not derive from any new call from Allah. It is men who decide the attitude of the gods and what they have to say about worldly affairs. It always has been. Wars are "*holy wars*" because men decide they are. This is to lend some "*moral*" cover in order to enlist the faithful in the killing and dying process

where power struggles, territorial ambition and conflicts over economic interests are what always lie behind the brutality.

During the Second World War the Germans and the Italians prayed to the same god to heap death upon the British as British believers prayed for the destruction of Germany. Why the "*god of love*" urges Christians to slaughter each other is really decided by the greater power, namely that of capital rivalries.

Religion is the major component of the perverse ideology that has adapted itself to the support of ruling classes through the centuries. It has been the spiritual endorsement for all the slaughter (through) of the ages. It has stood, and still stands, beside and behind the thrones of every monarch and land-grabbing tyrant in history. In making "*holy*" the inhuman barbarities of ruling classes in the amassing of immense wealth and power, the churches as the keeper of religion, have themselves become immensely wealthy and powerful. Their role is always to guarantee the submission of the masses.

Among the great contradictions of religious practice is that no matter what atrocities, manmade or natural disasters may occur, the Bishops of cant and the priests of humbug never call the faithful to the churches to condemn an almighty god who could, according to their dogma, have prevented the catastrophe, but instead, only to pray and listen to sermons. This is really a process of reaffirmation.

Literature that exposes the false claims and hollow foundations of religion is much less abundant and readily available today than it was fifty or a hundred years ago. Children are indoctrinated with absurd myths as soon as they start school and parents who have never been involved in the debating of ideas outside those of the establishment, and who themselves as children were subjected to the same insidious process, can offer no counterbalance. At home, the television and the radio churn out an endless deluge of mumbo-jumbo.

the television and the radio churn out an endless deluge of mumbo-jumbo, meaningless mystification, which is intended to lend authenticity and authority to the most inane nonsense.

In **The Churches and their Politics**, by Alan Flanders, published in 1938, among numerous examples of the hypocrisy of the Catholic Church we find on page 15:

*"... that following the conquest of Austria, Cardinal Innitzer issued an "Oath of fidelity of the church to the German people" in which he stated that Catholics must support without hesitation the great German State and its leader, "whose struggle against Bolshevism and for the honour and unity of Germany corresponds to the voice of Divine Providence!" (quoted by Flanders from the **Catholic Herald**, 18 March 1938).*

The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ, by Gerald Massey, has a preface by Chapman Cohen, himself a brilliant debunker of religion. This booklet is undated but Massey was born in 1928. In forty five pages he traces the ancient Egyptian origin of Christian mythology in great detail. The parallels are too numerous to quote out of sequence, but a summary is made on page 21, before more examples are given:

"The Christian religion was not founded on a man, but on a divinity: that is, a mythical character. So far from being derived from the model man, the typical Christ was made up of the features of various gods after a fashion somewhat like those "pictorial averages" portrayed by Mr Galton, in which the traits of several persons are photographed and fixed in a portrait of a dozen different persons, merged into one that is not anybody!"

While it is not the task of Socialists merely to debunk religion, we cannot conceive of capitalism without it and this is in any case not what we aim to achieve. It is nevertheless a fact that remains that while working men and women live on their knees, they will not be striving for the revolutionary abolition of the wages system.

The composite character depicted by Massey, of whom it is claimed that he was the son of the creator of the universe, knew nothing of astronomy.. He had no idea that our entire solar system, the sun, nine or possibly more planets and their moons revolve around the Milky Way galaxy. He did not know the meaning of the term light-year. This is because the age to which Christian mythology belongs did not possess such knowledge.

That all early religion was polytheistic is impossible to deny. *"Thou shalt have no other gods but me ..."* in the Bible refers to Jahweh, the same demand in the Koran refers to Allah. The fact of multiple gods is obvious in both cases. Polytheism retreated as the centralised State developed pulling together hundreds of princeling States and provinces as well as former tribal regions. The single centralised religion became the embodiment of many past existing deities and forms of worship.

This process can be seen today for example in Senegambia. Islam reached Senegambia in the 11th century. Animism is the oldest religion of Senegal and the Gambia, Christianity is the newest. Both early Muslims and Christians engaged in the slave trade. Black tribes had practised slavery even earlier. Today, Islam claims over 90% of the population but is jointly practised with remnants of pagan and animist rituals and myths. Animism holds that all earthly things possess spirits or souls - trees, animals and stones, etc. The crocodile is revered all over Senegambia. Christian and Muslim deities become identified with the old gods and are worshipped together. Animism also goes with ancestor worship.

On ITV a documentary programme - **It Ain't Necessary So** - showed modern archaeologists excavating stone images in Israel revealing Hebrew goddesses, which destroy the mono-theology of the Bible. References to these goddesses were removed from the James 1st text of the Old Testament supposedly because the translators did not understand this.

As far back as 1931, Grant Allen, in his excellent work **The Evolution of the Idea of God**, was detailing the polytheism of the Old Testament.

"Down to a comparatively late period of Jewish history, as we now know, Jahweh was but one and the highest among a considerable group of Israelitish divinities" (p125).

In his chapter discussing sacred stones, Grant Allen explains the universal use of gravestones with their origin in save times, to keep the corpse from rising, and how in time the stone is identified as the ghost or god and venerated by tribesmen.

"In fact just in proportion as the ghost evolves into the god, so does the tombstone begin to evolve into the fetish or idol" (p69).

He notes in passing, the teaching of the Hebrew myth to our children, that Adam was created from *"the dust of the ground"*. After elaborating much detail concerning the part played by *"sacred stones"* in religion throughout the world, Grant Allen concludes his chapter saying:

"I do not see, therefore, how we can easily avoid the obvious inference that Jahweh, the god of the Hebrews, who later became sublimated and etherialised into the god of Christianity, was in his origin nothing more nor less than the ancestral sacred stone of the people of Israel, however sculptured, and perhaps, in the very last resort of all, the unhewn monumental pillar of some early Semite Sheikh or chieftain" (p86).

Back in the mid-1840's when Marx and Engels dismantled Hegelian philosophy, the last bastion of abstract idealism fell. The materialist conception of history became, and remains, the indestructible lens through which history is made intelligible in purely human terms. The social co-operation of people in the production and reproduction of the means of

sustaining life and the intellectual framework built up as a reflection of this social productive activity, stands without serious challenge at the centre of sociology and political economy - the self-knowledge of Man in society.

With Scientific Socialism, Marx and Engels destroyed the theoretical basis and crude hypotheses of religion. Its continuing practice is an utter farce.

Islam and Slavery

The entire ancient as well as the contemporary scholars acknowledge the fact of slavery in Islam.

It seems incredible that Muslims chide the Christian religion for supporting slavery since Muhammad, himself, owned slaves. In his campaign against the children of Qurayza (the Jewish tribe), Muhammad killed all the males in one day, some 700 men, and then divided the women and children among his supporters.

The Caliphs across the ages followed Muhammad's footsteps and enslaved thousands of men and women who were captured in wars. Many of them were Persians and Byzantines. All the Islamic Chroniclers without exception have recorded these facts. The way Arab Muslims invaded Africa, traded with African kings for slaves or enslaved those they came across, is a well-known historical fact.

Capitalism knows no distinction in its exploitation of wage labour. The working class, whether they hold religious beliefs or not, are exploited world wide. Wage slavery and exploitation exists in all Muslim States and, in some of these states, chattel slavery still persists.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BREASTFEEDING

Production for profit or social use

The subject of breast feeding a breast milk has attracted increasing attention during the last thirty years. However, while scientific research shows breast milk to be beneficial fewer babies receive the product. As the facts about the benefits of breast feeding increase, so too, do the world-wide sales of artificial milks and feeding bottles.

Why, after more than a million years of survival, are human being being persuaded by advertising and commercial pressure to abandon one of the principal evolutionary characteristics by which they identify themselves as mammals? Is it to enable working class women to lead more fulfilled and equal lives? It isn't. The reason is profit.

The first serious concern raised against baby milk was made in 1939 by C Williams under the title **"Milk and Murder"** although over the next five years most capitalist countries in the world killed hundreds of thousands of babies through war, genocide and starvation.

The expansion of the baby milk industry during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occurred when mechanisation of the dairy industries resulted in large whey surpluses. When a capitalist has a waste product his first business is either to dump it or find a commercial way to exploit it.

The latter route was followed by Henri Nestle who invented the world's first artificial food in 1867. By 1973, 500,000 boxes of Nestle's Milk Food were sold in Europe, the US, Argentina, Mexico and the Dutch East Indies. Markets expanded and other companies saw an opportunity to make a profit. In 1998 it was estimated that annual sales of baby milk were worth US\$10.9 billion (Baby Milk Action, Briefing Paper 2002).

Except as acting as wet nurses to the rich, women, historically have not seen their natural milk turned into a commodity. The profits to be made from breast milk are through artificial not Natural means. To the Manufacturers of artificial breast milk the use by mothers of the natural equivalent is a commercial threat attacking profits. As Gabrielle Palmer noted in her book, **The politics of Breast feeding**, (1993):

"there is no equivalent vested interest group to protect breast feeding and it is destroyed for the same reasons that forests are destroyed - for immediate profits" (p24).

Capitalism does not encourage the promotion of products or systems which do not make a profit. Much of the financing and research into breast milk has come from the baby food industry.

The baby milk companies are not philanthropic organisations but commercial enterprises, which must make profit in a competitive world market in order to survive. The consequences of their actions are not seen by investors and directors to be commercial important. Every 30 seconds a baby dies from unsafe bottle-feeding, ie nearly 3,000 every 24 hours, and over 1 million each year. Without breast feeding babies don't get the benefit of passive immunity normally passed on in the mother's milk. In 1991 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) stated that in areas with unsafe water, a bottle-fed baby was 25 times more likely to die from diarrhoea than a breastfed one.

The risk of contracting serious diseases from bottle feeding is therefore high, but it is further compounded by the fact that, in developing capitalist countries, many people do not have access to a clean water supply with which to make up the formula, and poverty can lead to mothers over-diluting the formula to make it go further. Also, they are not able to sterilise the water or the bottles and teats used. Waterborne diseases feed straight into vulnerable babies to cause what is now a common condition in many parts of the world - diarrhoea.

vomiting, respiratory infections, malnutrition, dehydration and commonly death - known as Bottle-Baby disease (WHO/UNICEF 2001).

The Myth of the Free Market

Defenders of capitalism tell us that the invisible hand of the market leads only to the production of commodities people need. If this were so, then why do milk companies invest millions in newer and increasingly devious methods of advertising and marketing all over the world? These methods of commercial pressure are necessary because they are competing against something capitalism abhors, something free - mother's breast milk.

A notable failure of academic economics is its refusal to acknowledge power in economic affairs. In fact, making a free and competitive market the primary concept denies any place for class interest, class power and class privilege. Everything is supposed to be determined by market forces which no individual or firm can influence. All are assumed to be "*price takers*", meaning that businesses must sell at prices set by the free market and cannot affect those prices.

However, the baby food industry, along with other industries, is dominated by a few giant corporations who manipulate markets. This can be seen with the now-bankrupt Enron. At the height of the Californian electricity shortages Enron understated its planned energy deliveries to provoke fears of shortages and force the California grid operator to order extra supplies from more roundabout and expensive transmission routes. Enron also routed electricity through other states to circumvent Californian price caps, introduced in June 2001, and make windfall profits twice over - once in Washington and Oregon, and again in California when the electricity came back to the state on the emergency spot market. Ironically the chairman and his board were all advocates of the "*free market*" (*Independent*, 8 May 2002).

Big corporations and their governments take many of the important decisions in the world. The most important events in capitalism are more political than "economic" in the sense that the term is used in academic textbooks. The real subject of study should be political economy not economics. This was Marx's view. That is why he called his works "*a critique of political economy*". Economic relations between things are, in reality, social relations between classes.

The manipulation of marketing can be seen in the following example. The US-based company, Abbott-Ross provided free advice to hospitals for planning and layout. *"The purpose here is to impose a design that literally builds bottle-feeding into the facility by physically separating mother and infant to make bottle-feeding more convenient than breast feeding for the hospital staff ... A single investment in such architectural services can create new sales opportunities for the entire life-span of the building"* ("Confronting the US infant formula giants", **The Corporate Examiner**. vp; 2. no.7-8, July-August 1982). A far cry from schools of architecture where students are taught "*form follows function*". In the real world "*form follows profit*".

A company can gain prestige as a benefactor and create customers, all through a single, marketing and commercial strategy.

In her appendix, Gabriella Palmer details the way in which specific marketing strategies are applied.

- o Advertisements in the media, and distribution of baby booklets with misleading claims.
- o Aggressive hospital promotions.
 - o Employment of medical representatives to influence hospital policies and the medical professional's prescription for infant

feeding practice. One company training manual for sales personnel reports: *"Hospitals represent one of the most critical markets ... for infant formula. When one considers that for every one hundred infants discharged from the hospital on a particular formula brand, approximately 93 infants remain on that brand, the importance of hospital selling becomes obvious"*.

- o Milk companies sponsoring medical conventions including travel expenses and accommodation.
- o Researchers supporting artificial infant feeding are funded by milk companies.
- o Fellowships abroad for medical practitioners are granted by milk companies in return for favouring its product prescription.

Economists claim that the market is about choice. But choice under capitalism comes with a price. And one of the high prices to pay about market information is that it is commercial and shrouded in secrecy. Market information can never be transparent, open and factual. Market information is designed to secure sales; to induce people to buy and to make a profit.

The failure of social reforms

WHO and other pressure groups have urged boycotting companies like Nestles who have aggressive marketing techniques in developing capitalist countries in order to sell their brands of artificial breast milk. WHO/UNICEF drew up an international code of marketing of Breast milk substitutes in 1981 but the problem still persisted. The code was relaunched in 1988 and again it was ineffectual. All that has occurred is a mushrooming of reform groups - International Baby Food Action, Baby Milk Action. Multinational Monitor,

Corporate Watch, and the Infant Feeding Action Coalition who all campaign around the bizarre and empty notion of *"ethical consumerism"*.

Whereas Socialism, in which production would be for social need and not profit, would immediately deal with the problems around child malnutrition, disease and poverty, those who pursue social reforms as a *"solution"* let the social problem pass from one decade to the next.

The failure of enforcing the boycott is the one faced by all reformers. It takes for granted the framework in which Nestles and other companies exist: capitalism.

For nearly a couple of centuries two routes have been open for the resolution of social problems faced by the working class. Social reform or social revolution. Every conceivable social reform has been pursued to make capitalism work in the interests of all society but without success.

Pressure groups try to influence government policy. They believe they have an equal impact on government thinking and action to that enjoyed by the baby food industry. They also misleadingly perceive the State as a neutral arbiter who will make decisions along reasonable lines. Social reformers also see their particular social problem in isolation from other social problems.

The reality is altogether different. Business interests have a greater weighting than pressure groups like the anti-Nestle campaign because they start from a strong position of economic and social power. They own the means of production and distribution, their access to politicians is immediate and direct, and they have large financial and legal resources to call upon.

Then there is government policy. Even if *"enlightened"* legislation is enacted there is the problem of enforcement. The violations have to be monitored and there has to be a willingness to enforce and punish. Acts can be repealed under

pressure from foreign competitors who do not have to abide by the legislation and are making profit at the expense of British companies. An ethical foreign policy was an empty rhetorical gesture as civil servants in the Foreign Office were at pains to tell the then Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook.

And then there is the government itself. The government is the executive of the capitalist class making decisions in the interests of British capitalism. The State is not a neutral umpire. Its principle function is to conserve the monopoly of class ownership and privilege.

The position taken by Socialists is to see social problems facing the working class as a whole and to demonstrate their origin in commodity production and exchange for profit. This gives the Socialist case against capitalism its logical coherence. Social problems cannot be dealt with in isolation. Social reforms cannot be used to make capitalism benign and to be run in the interests of all society. Only the replacement of capitalism by Socialism will resolve these social problems.

The only framework to ensure that all information on products and services is transparent, open and honest is one in which common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society prevails. The social reformers do not accept this alternative. The consequence is that social problems persist, so much time and effort is wasted, and the unnecessary deaths continue.

Does God Exist?

It is said that the French mathematician Laplace took to the emperor Napoleon a copy of his famous book on the motions of heavenly bodies. Napoleon asked him what the place of God was in his system. To this Laplace replied: "*I have no need of that hypothesis*" (Does God Exist?, C Lofmark, Rationalist Press Association 1990).

A QUESTION OF PRICE

Reading through your literature I cannot find any reference to planning in a Socialist society. How do you see planning taking place? Writers such as Alec Nove did not think Socialist planning was possible, not even using computers, because there was too much information to handle. For example, what criteria would be used to switch from gas to electricity to gas again? How would the production process handle the thousands of components necessary to complete a unit of production? These are all practical concerns which need to be answered if Socialism is to have any credibility.

I am a student of engineering. In the design of an engineering plant much of what I design is in terms of price and so evaluations and comparisons can be made to implement the design. If Socialism does not have a price structure what are going to be the co-ordinating factors in order that rational and efficient production decisions can take place? I only raise these points because of the practicalities arising out of your proposals to undertake production without a price mechanism. What would be the mechanism that would replace it? Surely you must have some idea.

Andy Smith

Reply: Planning without Prices

The SPGB, as you noted, does not go into Utopian detail as to how a Socialist society would manage things. We do not think it useful - or necessary - to try to lay down blueprints for a society which, unfortunately, is not yet even dreamed of by most workers.

However, since you raised the question, let us consider some of the issues involved. You state that, in engineering "*much of what I design is in terms of price*", and this means "*evaluations and comparisons*" can be made.

Unfortunately, price can be misleading as a guide and has a distorting effect in deciding what materials, components, etc are used.

We all know the cheapest is not always the best, that "*you get what you pay for*". An engineering design where price is the sole or dominant criterion for selection of materials and components etc will not be of the same quality in terms of functionality, durability, performance and so on, as one where price is excluded from the calculation.

At best, price is only a shorthand which may be but often is not a guide to what will work best. Prices, after all, fluctuate in response to market forces, the unpredictable movement of the supply/demand ratio. When vitally important decisions are made, eg on handling nuclear waste with safety, then the price mechanism is an irritating and dangerous irrelevance.

In Socialism, where all production and distribution will be for use, not for profit, consumers and producers alike will be governed in their choices and decisions by the important criteria, such as functionality, durability, safety and environmental considerations.

Alec Nove's argument that planning would be impossible in Socialism because of information overload was largely influenced by his detailed study of the inefficient, centralised, state planning system of the late and unlamented Soviet Union. The answer is not the so-called "*free*" market or that contradiction in terms, "*Market Socialism*", since their reliance on prices makes these just as inefficient in organising production as a state planning system using targets and quotas.

By deleting prices from the calculation, and leaving only questions such as **what is needed**, **how much** in terms of raw materials, energy and other inputs, the **time factor** (is it an urgent project to save lives, or is this a long-term project which may take years to complete?), **environmental impact** (use of

scarce, non-renewables, possible pollution, and how best to offset these problems), and **transport/distribution issues** (advance planning and co-ordination so as to achieve a smooth flow without bottlenecks) - all these questions are easier and simpler to deal with without the complicating uncertainties of price fluctuations coming into the picture.

In capitalism we have a system which is extremely complex. Production is governed by competition and market considerations. This means that if market demand for widgets falls unexpectedly, companies stop producing widgets, regardless of whether widgets are still needed; factories are closed and skilled workers are made "*redundant*". The same applies in housing, car production and agriculture, and so on.

This is, to say the least, a very wasteful and inefficient way of arranging things. Again, production for the market encourages, even forces, companies to produce goods - for the consumer market especially - with "*built-in obsolescence*". The advertising industry then persuades us that perfectly useful and serviceable items just have to be replaced since they are now out of date, no longer fashionable. With all this, and much more by way of waste, it is clear that capitalism is criminally wasteful both of natural resources and of human labour.

Socialism may not be perfect. It will still be possible for producers to over-estimate or underestimate how much will be needed, and so either too much or too little will be produced. But that will be easier to correct (eg by keeping sizeable stockpiles in case of a shortfall in production) than it is in capitalism with its price-driven alternation from glut to shortage, and back again.

The belief in prices as serving as a useful and reliable signal governing decisions on production and distribution is an ideological myth. The question that capitalist economies can never answer is how much should be produced to

satisfy people's **needs**. This is because the movement of prices, up or down, relates only to increasing or decreasing **demand**, ie need backed by ability to pay. That is why no government has yet been able to solve the housing problem, and it is the real reason why many people go hungry and starve, even in countries which export foodstuffs to feed the rich in other countries. Famines, in the modern world, are largely an economic phenomenon, just as is homelessness.

By getting rid of production for profit, the exchange of goods through buying and selling, and all forms of money transactions, the real business of producing what people decide they need will be hugely simplified, in fact, liberated. For those who, like you, work in engineering and production, they would find - along with new challenges - their work would be much easier and more fulfilling without having to take account of the unpredictable vagaries of the markets.

Another point: in Socialism it may be that it will not always be necessary or desirable to try to minimise "*cost*", especially in terms of the labour-time needed. After all, a Socialist society will not have to bear on its back the burden of hordes of bankers, accountants, lawyers, tax officials, etc - people whose work is, at best, only useless, at worst positively harmful. There may be a case for encouraging products to be made more slowly and carefully, with more regard to the quality of the finished product, and the safety and enjoyment of the worker. This would be a luxury in capitalism where commodities are produced as fast as possible so as to minimise labour costs, regardless of the effect this has both on the quality of the product and on the health, safety and well-being of the workers.

So what if there is an occasional, accidental glitch, with a temporary surplus or shortage? Mistakes are possible and miscalculations cannot always be avoided. But since in Socialism production and distribution will be organised *solely* for the purpose of satisfying people's needs, problems of this sort would

be far less likely than they are now under capitalism, where production is for profit and distribution to end-users depends on the profitability of a number of non-productive intermediaries, on the vagaries of foreign exchange markets, to say nothing of the Stock Exchanges, and ultimately on the unpredictable level of economic "*demand*" (need backed by ability to pay) of these end-users.

The net result of this is that commodities are produced in abundance for the rich, whilst the market mechanism works to draw commodities out of reach of the poorest. This effect is clearly to be seen in famine situations. The problem of hunger is primarily an economic problem, a poverty problem. The price mechanism, with its "*signals*", instead of producing a rational distribution of food to people whose crops have failed, operates against this. Their need is less important than their lack of purchasing power. The laws of the commodity system are far from being "*rational and efficient*" in determining what is produced and how resources are used.

To conclude: to figure out how much is needed, and how much will be required in terms of raw materials, energy inputs, labour time, other relevant inputs, and other considerations such as environmental issues, and how to ensure efficient smooth distribution between different stages of production, as well as from the final producers to the end-users - all this would be much simpler and easier to manage without the complicating factors of competition, profits, exchange rates and price fluctuations, not to mention the unpredictability of falling or rising levels of demand. The main "*co-ordinating mechanism*" needed would be intelligent co-operation, something which the capitalist system discourages.

LITERATURE AVAILABLE

ALL PRICES ARE
INCLUSIVE OF
POSTAGE

Socialist Studies - our official journal
Issues Nos: 1 - 45 @ 50p each

Socialist Principles Explained
The Object and Declaration of Principles
25 p.p. Pamphlet 75p

Banking & Credit Myths

A Socialist View 60p

Socialist's Handbook £1

Four "Questions of the Day" pamphlets: - 50p each

No.1. Inflation: Cause and Effects

No.2. Unemployment and Recessions.

No.3. Marx - Modern History and Economics.

No.6. The Continuing Trade War.

The Materialist Conception of History Price £1

Our pamphlet looks at the theory of the MCH
and relates it to 20th Century Capitalism.

War and Capitalism Price £1

Updated reprint including reference to recent conflicts.

Women and Socialism Price 80p

Sixth reprint includes "Whatever happened to Feminism?"

Marxism in the 21st Century Price £1

A new pamphlet covering essential aspects of Marxian economics.

The Communist Manifesto in the 21st Century Price 80p

Economic Crises. Special Supplement No. 1. Price £1

Economic Crises. Special Supplement No. 2. Price £1

Why Capitalism will not collapse Price 80p

Trade Unions - Partnership or Confrontation ? Price 80p

New Labour - A Party of Capitalism Price £1

Capitalism Causes War and Terrorism Price £1

Socialist Policies & Principles - Setting the record straight £1

LITERATURE - SPECIAL OFFER

For an in-depth study of the case of
The Socialist Party of Great Britain
we have 3 special offers.

A full set of our Socialist Studies journals (nos. 1-45) for £10.00.

A set of our pamphlets listed above (19 in all) for £13.00

Or all the above listed journals and pamphlets for only £18.00.

ORDERS TO OUR HEAD OFFICE.

71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB
(Please make cheques payable to SOCIALIST STUDIES).

- Postage stamps acceptable for individual items -

LECTURE SERIES 2002 - 2003

For the 12th year we have pleasure in listing the following meetings, to advance and clarify some of the fundamentals of the socialist case, and commentate on matters of current interest.

Sunday 20th October

CAPITALISM, RACISM & POLITICS

Recurring social problems

Speaker: R Lloyd.

Sunday 10th November

LENIN & THE VANGUARDS

Speaker C. Skelton.

Sunday 24th November

WHY THE S.P.G.B. REJECTS RELIGION Speaker: H. Baldwin.

(This lecture may be substituted for a debate with the Christian Socialist Movement)

Sunday 8th December

SOCIALIST OPPOSITION TO WAR

Speaker: C. May.

Meetings commence at 3 p.m.

Marchmont Community Centre

62 Marchmont Street, London WC1.

(5 mins. Russell Square Tube Station)

Question and Discussion period. Admission Free.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH

meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at

51 Argyle Street, London WC1 (5 mins. Kings Cross Tube Station)

All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.

Socialism on the Web

The Socialist Party of Great Britain now has its own web site at

www.spgb.org.uk

The e-mail address for the party is: enquiries@spgb.org.uk

AUDIO TAPES

For those of you unable to attend our lectures, we can offer a selection of audio tapes covering our recent meetings, and some, mostly about economics given by our late Comrade Hardy, many years ago. Most of them also cover the Questions and Discussion period at the end of the lecture.

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 101. Trade and Capitalism Wars.
The Socialist Alternative. | E. Hardy |
| 102. Nationalisation and Privatisation. | E. Hardy. (1986). |
| 103. Profits, Riches and Poverty, and
Prices, Wages & Unemployment | E. Hardy. (1986). |
| 104. Mrs. Thatcher's Popular Capitalism. | E. Hardy. |
| 105. Capitalism - Utopian & Scientific | R. Lloyd. (2002). |
| 106. Is Human Nature a barrier to Socialism. | P. Young. (2002). |
| 107. Socialist Ideas 1900 - 2000. | T. D'Arcy
& D Davies. (2002) |
| 108. The Futility of Reformism. | P. George and
C. May. (2002). |
| 109. Marxian Economics (2 lectures).
Wage Labour & Capital.
Value, Price & Profit. | E. Hardy. (1962) |
| 110. How we live and how we might live. | C. Skelton. (2002) |
| 111. Defining Terrorism. | H. Baldwin. (2002). |

These are 90 minute and 120 minute audio tapes.

The cost of each tape is £2.50 including postage.

Please order by reference number and make
your cheque payable to Socialist Studies.

SOCIALIST POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES . . .

Setting the record straight.

A couple of years ago, David Perrin, a member of the Clapham based Party that expelled our members in 1991, wrote a book entitled . . .

The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Politics, Economics and Britain's Oldest Socialist Party.

Whilst it was not an official history of the S.P.G.B. since its formation in 1904, the book was given a fawning review in the columns of Clapham's journal - Socialist Standard - thus giving it almost 'official' endorsement.

While the book omitted certain important features of our case, it also contained various statements on Party history and policy with which we fundamentally disagree.

Rather than just write a critical review of the book, we have decided to publish a pamphlet, not only with our criticisms but also with what we consider to be the correct party attitude and interpretation of socialist theory, hence the title . . .
Setting the record straight.

Our pamphlet runs to some 40 pages, and in our view is a fairly comprehensive statement on the manner in which Clapham departs from the consistently argued SPGB case which is the only way forward for revolutionary socialists.

The cost is just £1 post paid.

Please make your cheque payable to Socialist Studies, or you can send stamps.